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United States District Court
Northern District of California

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

ALMA CLARISA HERNANDEZ,
Plaintiff,
vs.
POLANCO ENTERPRISES, INC. ,
Defendant.

Case No.: 11-CV-02247 YGR
ORDER RE: CROSS-MOTIONS FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT

Plaintiff Alma Clarisa Hernandez, who has used a wheelchair since 2004, brought this action under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*, alleging that architectural barriers at Defendant Polanco Enterprises, Inc.’s gasoline station denied her full and equal enjoyment and use of the facility, including the station’s attached convenience store and the restroom inside. Plaintiff’s First Amended Complaint (Dkt. No. 36 [“FAC”]) identifies 40 alleged architectural barriers at the subject gas station, upon which she bases four distinct legal claims for violations of: (1) the ADA; (2) the California Disabled Persons Act, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 54 and 54.1 (“DPA”); (3) the California Unruh Civil Rights Act, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 51, 51.5 (“Unruh Act”); and (4) California Health & Safety Code § 19953. Since this action commenced, Defendant has undertaken an extensive remediation effort eliminating 37 barriers. Notwithstanding that effort, Plaintiff avers that four barriers exist post-remediation: two that Plaintiff claims were never corrected and two that Defendant allegedly created during its remediation efforts.

1 Now before the Court are fully briefed cross-motions for summary judgment on all claims.
2 *See* Dkt. Nos. 46 (“Pl. MSJ”), 47 (“Def. MSJ”), 58 (“Pl. Opp’n”), 60 (“Def. Opp’n”), 63 (“Pl.
3 Reply”), & 64 (“Def. Reply”). This Order addresses the alleged remaining four barriers: (i) the
4 alleged lack of a low-level push plate to operate the power-assisted door installed at the facility’s
5 accessible entrance; (ii) the allegedly excessive slope of a designated accessible route from the public
6 sidewalk to the entrance; (iii) the allegedly excessive slope of a new landing constructed at that
7 entrance; and (iv) the alleged lack of sufficient space for a wheelchair to maneuver in the gas
8 station’s restroom. The cross-motions turn on three issues. The first issue is whether the alleged
9 remaining barriers were pled adequately in the FAC. If they were and the barriers exist, the second
10 issue is whether Defendant is shielded from ADA liability because removal of the barrier is not
11 “readily achievable;” Plaintiff argues that Defendant waived this defense during discovery. The third
12 issue is whether the most recent iteration of the California Building Code applies to the restroom
13 altered by Defendant as part of its remediation efforts.

14 Having carefully considered the papers submitted and the record, and having had the benefit
15 of oral argument, for good cause appearing the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s motion for summary
16 judgment and **PARTLY GRANTS AND PARTLY DENIES** Defendant’s cross-motion, as set forth below.

17 **I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND**

18 **A. THE PARTIES AND THE INITIAL PROCEEDINGS**

19 Plaintiff suffers from progressively deteriorating conditions of scoliosis/kyphoscoliosis, Pott’s
20 disease, and paraplegia. Plaintiff also has experienced renal failure and receives dialysis three times
21 per week. As a result of her conditions, Plaintiff can walk only with the aid of arm braces, and then
22 only for a short time. Since approximately 2004, she has used a wheelchair to go out in public.

23 Defendant operates a gasoline station that was built in 1969. The station includes a
24 convenience store, inside of which is a restroom. The station is located on the route Plaintiff travels
25 between her residence and the center where she receives her dialysis. Plaintiff sometimes stops at
26 Defendant’s gasoline station to get gasoline and purchase items from the convenience store, and she
27 would like to be able to use the restroom there. On May 21, 2010, Plaintiff visited Defendant’s
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1 gasoline station but was unable to enter the convenience store because the sidewalk at the entrance
2 was too narrow. Plaintiff filed this lawsuit on May 6, 2011.

3 Plaintiff seeks relief under the ADA and California state law in the form of an injunction
4 requiring Defendant to remove the barriers that deny her full and equal access to the gas station.
5 Plaintiff further seeks a declaration that Defendant violated the ADA, statutory damages under
6 California’s Unruh Act or DPA, and prevailing-party attorney fees and costs.

7 On August 12, 2011, Plaintiff’s designated expert, Gary Layman, inspected Defendant’s gas
8 station. Dkt. No. 46-12 (“Layman Decl.”) ¶ 4. Layman produced a written report that purports to
9 summarize his observations, dated August 24, 2012. Dkt. No. 51-1 (“Layman Initial Report”). This
10 report also sets forth forty-six separate “requirements” which, if accomplished, would, in Layman’s
11 opinion, bring the gas station into compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
12 (“2010 ADA Standards”) and the 2010 California Building Code (“2010 CBC.”).¹ *Id.* at 14-19.²

13 On July 2, 2012, Plaintiff sought leave to file an amended complaint, which the Court
14 granted. Dkt. Nos. 32, 35. Plaintiff filed the FAC on August 8, 2012. Paragraph 11 of the FAC
15 enumerates forty alleged barriers to Plaintiff’s use of Defendant’s gasoline station. FAC ¶¶ 11(a)-
16 11(nn).

17 On August 22, 2012, Defendant filed an Answer to the FAC asserting thirty-one affirmative
18 defenses. Dkt. No. 37 (“Answer”). Defendant’s twenty-second affirmative defense states: “[T]he
19 removal of any barriers, if any exist, the fact of which is expressly denied, [was] and [is] not readily
20 achievable and easily accomplishable so as to be accomplished by Defendants without much
21 difficulty or expense. As such the overall impact of such removal would be financially detrimental to
22 Defendants.”³ *Id.* at 11. That defense is a recognized affirmative defense to ADA liability. *See, e.g.,*
23 *Wilson v. Haria & Gogri Corp.*, 479 F. Supp. 2d 1127, 1133 n.7 (E.D. Cal. 2007) (collecting cases
24 where defense was asserted).

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26 ¹ The 2010 CBC is codified in the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 2.

27 ² Where an exhibit is bates-stamped, the Court cites to the bates-stamp’s final digits.

28 ³ A second defendant was dismissed by stipulation on September 24, 2012.

1 **B. DISCOVERY ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE READILY-ACHIEVABLE DEFENSE**

2 On September 24, 2012, Defendant provided supplemental responses to interrogatories
3 propounded by Plaintiff. Dkt. No. 58-5 (“Def. Supp. Interrog. Resp.”). Plaintiff’s ninth interrogatory
4 asked Defendant to identify any of the barriers listed in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the FAC for which
5 removal was not “readily achievable.” *Id.* at 11. Defendant responded that the alleged barriers either
6 did not exist or were in the process of being brought “into compliance with all federal and state
7 laws,” and that consequently Defendant did “not contend that it [was] not ‘readily achievable’ to
8 ‘remove’ those barriers.” *Id.* at 12. Defendant further stated that, although some remediation efforts
9 were incomplete, it was “not aware of any additional unanticipated or unforeseen modifications or
10 ‘alterations,’ and/or any additional associated costs, that may be required to remove the alleged
11 ‘barriers,’ and therefore [was] unable to state at this time which of the alleged ‘barriers’ are not
12 ‘readily achievable’ to remove, if any.” *Id.* Defendant further stated that it would amend its
13 supplemental responses if it learned that removal of any of the specified barriers was not readily
14 achievable. *Id.* at 12-13.

15 In a similar vein, Plaintiff’s tenth and eleventh interrogatories asked, respectively, for details
16 about the difficulties that made removal of any barrier not readily achievable, and for details about
17 any impact on the gas station that would result from barrier removal. *Id.* at 13-15. Defendant gave
18 substantially the same answer that it did to the ninth interrogatory: it did not anticipate being unable
19 to remove any barriers, but would supplement its responses to address the readily-achievable defense
20 if it was. *See id.* Defendant also declined to produce its “financial statements, profit and loss
21 statements, cash flow statements, balance sheets, tax returns, and income statements . . . for the past
22 five (5) years,” reciting substantially the same reasons. Dkt. No. 58-6 (“Def. RFP Resp.”) at 10-11.

23 On September 26, 2012, Plaintiff took the deposition of David Polanco Sr., the President of
24 Defendant Polanco Enterprises, Inc. Dkt. No. 58-7 (“Polanco Sr. Dep.”). During the deposition,
25 Defendant’s counsel stated on the record that the parties had “stipulated in writing that [certain
26 financial documents] need not be produced at this point unless defendants raise the readily achievable
27 affirmative defense, and that we would take up that issue at a later time.” *Id.* at 20:15-19. On
28 September 28, 2012, the time for fact discovery ended. Dkt. No. 28 at 1.

1 **C. LITIGATION STAYED FOR REMEDIATION**

2 On November 9, 2012, in anticipation of the filing of motions for summary judgment,
3 Defendant requested a 120-day stay of the action during which it would “complete the remaining
4 construction/alterations and file a cross-MSJ, which will dispose of this action in its entirety.” Dkt.
5 No. 43. Defendant represented that it could not yet determine “whether the ‘not readily achievable’
6 defense should be raised with respect to any of the remaining alleged ‘barriers’” *Id.* at 2-3.
7 Defendant informed the Court that it anticipated being able, at the end of the 120-day period, either to
8 remove the remaining barriers identified in the FAC or determine for which of those barriers it would
9 raise the readily-achievable defense. *Id.* at 3. Defendant proposed that the parties: serve
10 supplemental expert reports to assess whether Defendant’s remediation efforts had cured the barriers
11 alleged in the FAC by March 11, 2013; file a list of stipulated undisputed facts by March 18, 2013;
12 and file their cross-motions for summary judgment by March 25, 2013.

13 On November 13, 2012, the Court issued a scheduling order adopting Defendant’s proposal.
14 Dkt. No. 44.

15 **D. POST-REMEDIATION DEVELOPMENTS**

16 On March 1, 2013, ten days before the parties’ deadline to serve supplemental expert reports,
17 Plaintiff’s designated expert, Layman, re-inspected the gas station. Layman Decl. ¶ 5. Layman
18 observed that the gas station had undergone “significant alterations” since his initial visit in August
19 2011. *Id.* ¶ 7. Layman found that most of the barriers he had identified during his initial inspection
20 in August 2011 had been removed, but that some barriers still existed. *Id.* ¶ 4. Layman purported to
21 have identified seven new violations of the ADA, the CBC, or both. *Id.* ¶ 5. Of the seven purported
22 violations, four are relevant here, namely: (1) excessive slope on the designated accessible route,
23 ranging from 3.7 to 4.7 percent; (2) excessive slope of 2.9 percent on the landing for the entrance
24 door;⁴ (3) the lack of a low-level push plate on the automatic door-opener system; and (4) only 39.25
25 inches of clear floor space in front of the toilet when there should have been 48 inches. *See id.*; *see*

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⁴ The applicable 2010 ADA Standards require both the accessible route and the entrance landing to have a slope no greater than 1:48, which is equivalent to 2.08333 percent. *See* 2010 ADA Standards §§ 304.2, 403.3, 404.2.4.4, 405.7.1. The parties refer to this standard as “2 percent.”

1 also Dkt. No. 51-5 (“Layman Supp. Report”) (identifying these purported barriers).⁵ The parties’
2 cross-motions center on those four purported barriers, herein denominated as the “accessible-route,”
3 “entrance-landing,” “low-level push plate,” and “restroom-space” barriers, respectively.⁶

4 **II. LEGAL STANDARD**

5 A party may move for summary judgment on a “claim or defense” or “part of . . . a claim or
6 defense.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(a). Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine dispute
7 as to any material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. *Id.*

8 A party seeking summary judgment bears the initial burden of informing the court of the basis
9 for its motion, and of identifying those portions of the pleadings and discovery responses that
10 demonstrate the absence of a genuine issue of material fact. *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317,
11 323 (1986). Material facts are those that might affect the outcome of the case. *Anderson v. Liberty*
12 *Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986). A dispute as to a material fact is “genuine” if there is
13 sufficient evidence for a reasonable jury to return a verdict for the nonmoving party. *Wellington v.*
14 *Lyon Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 187 F.3d 1150, 1154 (9th Cir. 1999) (citing *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 248).
15 Disputes over irrelevant or unnecessary facts will not preclude a grant of summary judgment. *T.W.*
16 *Elec. Serv., Inc. v. Pac. Elec. Contractors Ass’n*, 809 F.2d 626, 630 (9th Cir. 1987).

17 **III. DISCUSSION**

18 As an initial matter, with respect to the 37 barriers identified in the FAC whose remediation
19 Plaintiff concedes, the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment and **GRANTS**
20 Defendant’s cross-motion. Where, as here, a private plaintiff brings an ADA claim seeking to enjoin

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22 ⁵ The parties agree that three barriers stemming from a missing handrail and the positioning of a grab
23 bar in the restroom have been remediated. *See* Dkt. No. 78 (“Joint Fact Stmt.”), Chart 3.

24 ⁶ Plaintiff claims that the low-level push plate and restroom-space barriers were created by
25 Defendant’s remediation efforts. With respect to the low-level push plate barrier, Layman indicated
26 that an upper push plate had been installed at the convenience store entrance but that the 2010 ADA
27 Standards and 2010 CBC Standards required “both an upper and a lower push plate.” Layman Decl.
28 ¶ 5(d). According to Plaintiff, Defendant created the low-level push plate barrier by failing to
include a low-level push plate when installing a new power-assisted door. As to restroom-space
barrier, Plaintiff’s position is that Defendant undertook extensive remodeling in the restroom and, in
doing so, repositioned the toilet from a compliant location within the restroom to a noncompliant
location. *See id.* ¶ 9.

1 a defendant to remove an architectural barrier, removal of the barrier before final judgment moots the
2 ADA claim based on that barrier. *See Oliver v. Ralphs Grocery Co.*, 654 F.3d 903, 905 (9th Cir.
3 2011); *see also Duvall v. Cnty. of Kitsap*, 260 F.3d 1124, 1133 (9th Cir. 2001) (ADA claims became
4 moot when plaintiff received the accommodation he sought). Where a state-law claim is based
5 entirely on a mooted ADA claim, it follows that the state-law claim is mooted as well. Here, the
6 undisputed facts establish that 37 of the 40 barriers identified in the FAC have been remediated and
7 brought into ADA compliance. Joint. Fact. Stmt. at 2-10. Further, Plaintiff has made no showing
8 that those barriers could support state-law claims independent of the alleged ADA violations.
9 Defendant is therefore entitled to judgment in its favor on all claims based on those barriers.

10 The Court now turns to the four alleged barriers at the center of this dispute.

11 **A. ADEQUACY OF FAC AS TO FOUR BARRIERS AT ISSUE**

12 Defendant challenges three of the four alleged barriers on the ground that the FAC fails to
13 give sufficient notice of them. Def. Opp'n at 9 (low-level push plate), 10-12 (entrance landing), 15-
14 17 (accessible route). In barrier removal cases, an ADA plaintiff may prevail only with respect to
15 barriers alleged in the operative complaint. *Oliver*, 654 F.3d at 908; *see also Carr v. L.A. Fitness*
16 *Int'l LLC*, SACV 12-1071-JST, 2013 WL 3851230, at *6 (C.D. Cal. July 23, 2013) (relying on *Oliver*
17 to bar relief for barriers not alleged in complaint); *Paulick v. Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide,*
18 *Inc.*, C-10-01919 JCS, 2012 WL 2990760, at *12-13 (N.D. Cal. July 20, 2012) (same); *O'Campo v.*
19 *Chico Crossroads*, CIV S-10-1100-KJM, 2011 WL 5241351, at *2-3 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 31, 2011)
20 (same); *Strong v. Walgreen Co.*, 09CV611 WQH BLM, 2011 WL 5374125, at *4 (S.D. Cal. Nov. 8,
21 2011) (same). This rule stems from the notice requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8.
22 *See Oliver*, 654 F.3d at 908-09 (discussing *Pickern v. Pier 1 Imports (U.S.), Inc.*, 457 F.3d 963 (9th
23 Cir. 2006)). Only barriers identified "in the complaint itself" satisfy Rule 8: "a defendant is not
24 deemed to have fair notice of barriers identified elsewhere." *Id.* at 909. That includes barriers
25 identified for the first time in an expert report. *Id.*; *Carr*, 2013 WL 3851230, at *6; *Paulick*, 2012
26 WL 2990760, at *12; *Strong*, 2011 WL 5374125, at *4; *see also Rush v. Highgrove Restaurants, Inc.*,
27 --- F. App'x ---, 2013 WL 1288068, at *1 n.1 (9th Cir. Apr. 1, 2013) (refusing to consider claims
28 "first identified by [plaintiff's] expert in an untimely affidavit submitted in response to [defendant's]

1 motion for summary judgment” because the claims were not included in plaintiff’s amended
2 complaint and “she did not seek leave to file a second amended complaint”).

3 *Oliver* offered two justifications for requiring ADA plaintiffs to identify all barriers in their
4 operative complaints. *Paulick*, 2012 WL 2990760, at *12. “First, it reasoned that identifying the
5 specific barriers that are at issue only in the expert report does not provide fair notice because it
6 leaves a defendant guessing as to which barriers the plaintiff will actually proceed with.” *Id.*
7 “Second, it pointed out that expert reports are typically completed later in the case, giving rise to
8 prejudice to a defendant who has already incurred litigation costs defending under the plaintiff’s
9 earlier theory.” *Id.*

10 While *Oliver* clearly states that the operative complaint must identify all barriers for which
11 relief is sought, how much specificity is required when alleging those barriers is less clear. The two
12 most recent Ninth Circuit opinions squarely addressing pleading standards in ADA barrier cases are
13 *Oliver* and *Skaff v. Meridien North America Beverly Hills, LLC*, 506 F.3d 832 (9th Cir. 2007). A
14 district court opinion, *Sharp*, reconciled the holdings of *Oliver* and *Skaff* by identifying two different
15 “pleading approaches,” both of which may satisfy both Rule 8. *See Sharp v. Islands California*
16 *Arizona LP*, 900 F. Supp. 2d 1101, 1105-08 (S.D. Cal. 2012). One approach, apparently endorsed in
17 *Skaff*, is to identify a specific area where barriers exist, for example, a bedroom. *See id.* at 1107.
18 Doing so places the defendant on notice that “discovery is needed to determine the exact barriers in
19 the” area. *Id.* The other approach, apparently endorsed in *Oliver*, requires a plaintiff to identify each
20 barrier presented by an architectural feature with enough specificity to preclude the plaintiff from
21 later alleging a different barrier stemming from the same feature. *See id.* This level of specificity
22 prevents plaintiffs from gradually disclosing the existence of barriers, a practice that prejudices
23 defendants and is plainly aimed at winning attorney fees rather than remediating discriminatory
24 barriers. *See, e.g., Oliver*, 654 F.3d at 906 n.7 (There, “[plaintiff]’s counsel later explained that his
25 delays in identifying the barriers at the facility were part of his legal strategy: he purposely ‘forces
26 the defense to wait until expert disclosures (or discovery) before revealing a complete list of barriers,’
27 because otherwise a defendant could remove all the barriers prior to trial and moot the entire case.”).
28 The Court finds *Sharp* persuasive and applies its reasoning in this case.

1 Here, the FAC alleges, in pertinent part, that: “A properly identified and configured accessible
2 route is not provided from the public way and accessible parking to the accessible entrance,” FAC ¶
3 11(b); “Proper 60” x 60” door landings are not provided at all accessible entrances and exits,” *id.* ¶
4 11(n); and “[t]he restroom does not provide sufficient space for a wheelchair to maneuver,” *id.* ¶
5 11(gg). Plaintiff acknowledges that the low-level push plate barrier, as well as the restroom-space
6 barrier as it is currently, and more specifically, framed, are not identified in the FAC. *See* Pl. Reply
7 at 1 (“The two barriers not alleged in the FAC are [Defendant]’s failure to provide a lower level push
8 plate at the automatic door opener, and the failure to provide 48” in front of the toilet.”). Plaintiff
9 argues, however, that she nevertheless may proceed as to these alleged barriers because (i) Defendant
10 knew or should have known of them and (ii) barring Plaintiff from seeking relief from all the barriers
11 she can now identify would contravene Ninth Circuit authority. *Id.* at 2-4. Defendant, on the other
12 hand, argues that the accessible-route, entrance-landing, or low-level push plate barriers are pled in
13 too general a manner to have provided Defendant with fair notice of either the barrier’s existence or
14 Plaintiff’s intent to seek relief for it. Def. Reply at 2-4; 7-8; 9.

15 Neither party is entirely correct. Applying *Sharp*, the Court concludes that the FAC put
16 Defendant on notice of three of the four remaining alleged barriers. First, paragraph 11(b) put
17 Defendant on notice that Plaintiff sought relief for the lack of a “properly identified and configured”
18 accessible route. That allegation is specific enough to have enabled Defendant to ascertain where
19 such a route should have been located and how it should have been configured. Second, the
20 entrance-landing allegation of paragraph 11(n) put Defendant on notice that it needed to bring the
21 entrance landing into compliance with applicable standards. In both cases, the Court gives
22 substantial weight to the wording of the allegations, which state that the gas station lacks not just *any*
23 entrance landing measuring at least 60 inches square or *any* accessible route, but “proper” ones.
24 Third, paragraph 11(gg) put Defendant on notice of a need to bring the restroom into compliance by
25 adequately identifying the area where the alleged barrier could be found (the restroom) and the type
26 of barrier alleged (insufficient space for a wheelchair). Plaintiff’s concession that the restroom-space
27 barrier as presently framed is missing from the FAC is immaterial. Paragraph 11(gg) notified
28 Defendant of the need to provide “sufficient space” for a wheelchair to maneuver in the restroom.

1 How much space is “sufficient” is a question controlled by the building standards upon which
2 Plaintiff based her ADA and state-law claims. Paragraph 11(gg), in concert with Plaintiff’s legal
3 claims, put Defendant on sufficient notice to enable it to prepare a defense, including attempting to
4 remediate the alleged barrier and moot any claims based on it. In doing so, paragraph 11(gg)
5 satisfied Rule 8 and *Oliver*.

6 The Court rejects Defendant’s argument that it lacked fair notice of the entrance-landing
7 barrier because the Layman Initial Report did not identify the entrance landing’s slope as a barrier.
8 Def. Opp’n at 10-11; Def. Reply at 8. Defendant asserts that it modified the entrance landing by
9 laying new concrete around it to expand its size, without modifying the preexisting landing. Def.
10 Opp’n at 4; Dkt. No. 60-2 (“Polanco Jr. Supp. Decl.”) ¶ 5. The Layman Initial Report does not
11 identify the slope of the pre-modification landing as a barrier, even though the Layman Supplemental
12 Report does. According to Defendant, both reports concern the same slab of concrete, and
13 accordingly the Court must bar as insufficiently pled any claim based on the landing slope because, if
14 its slope truly were excessive, Layman would have identified that fact in his Initial Report and
15 Plaintiff would have alleged the barrier in her FAC. This argument is unavailing for two reasons.
16 First, the touchstone of notice is the operative complaint, not the content of expert reports. *Oliver*,
17 654 F.3d at 909. Second, as Plaintiff points out (Pl. Reply at 14), the argument, in its essence, merely
18 attacks Layman’s credibility. The Court, however, cannot weigh credibility during summary
19 judgment or for the purpose of determining the sufficiency of pleadings. *See, e.g., Nelson v. City of*
20 *Davis*, 571 F.3d 924, 929 (9th Cir. 2009) (summary judgment); *Molski v. Arby's Huntington Beach*,
21 359 F. Supp. 2d 938, 948 (C.D. Cal. 2005) (pleading).

22 With respect to the adequacy of notice as to the fourth alleged remaining barrier, the low-level
23 push plate barrier, the Court finds unpersuasive Plaintiff’s argument that that she is entitled to relief
24 from that barrier notwithstanding its acknowledged absence from the operative complaint. Both of
25 *Oliver*’s justifications for requiring the operative complaint to identify all barriers—notice and
26 reliance—are compelling in this case. Defendant’s extensive remediation efforts attempted to moot
27 the entire FAC. The record now before the Court indicates that Defendant spent roughly four months
28 and \$50,000 in pursuit of that goal. *See Polanco Jr. Decl.* ¶ 9. Following remediation, which

1 extensively altered the gas station, Defendant could not have known from which barriers Plaintiff still
2 sought relief. Plaintiff argues that she could not have identified the low-level push plate barrier in her
3 FAC because Defendant’s remediation efforts created that barrier. This argument overlooks the fact
4 that Plaintiff could have sought leave to amend her complaint under Rule 15’s liberal standard. *See*
5 Fed. R. Civ. P. 15(a) (requiring that courts “freely give leave when justice so requires”); *see also id.*
6 15(b)(1) (raising possibility of amendment during or even after trial); *Theme Promotions, Inc. v.*
7 *News Am. Mktg. FSI*, 546 F.3d 991, 1010 (9th Cir. 2008) (leave to amend given “liberally” unless
8 amendment would be futile); *cf. Rush*, --- F. App’x ---, 2013 WL 1288068, at *1 n.1 (rejecting claim
9 based on barrier first identified by expert in part because plaintiff never sought leave to allege the
10 barrier in an amended complaint). Here, Plaintiff never sought leave to amend, even after receiving
11 the Layman Supplemental Report and after Defendant’s summary judgment motion made it plain that
12 Defendant regarded itself, rightly or wrongly, as having mooted all the barriers identified in the FAC.
13 Instead of putting Defendant on notice of the barriers from which she still sought relief after
14 remediation, Plaintiff continued to seek summary judgment as to purported barriers which Plaintiff
15 admittedly never identified in her operative complaint. Defendant incurred additional litigation costs
16 defending against those claims. *Oliver* and its progeny required Plaintiff to identify all barriers, i.e.,
17 to state all her claims for relief, in her operative complaint. With respect to the low-level push plate
18 barrier, Plaintiff did not. As a matter of law, then, Plaintiff cannot prevail on claims based on that
19 barrier.

20 Plaintiff contends that Defendant’s actual knowledge of the existence of a barrier satisfies
21 Rule 8 even in the absence of a proper pleading. *See* Pl. Reply at 3. Plaintiff is incorrect.
22 Knowledge of the barrier alone is not enough. Under *Oliver*, an ADA defendant also must have fair
23 notice that the ADA plaintiff intends to pursue a legal claim based on that barrier. *Oliver*, 654 F.3d at
24 908-909; *Paulick*, 2012 WL 2990760, at *12. Here, by failing to amend her operative complaint,
25 Plaintiff failed to provide adequate notice of her continuing intent to seek relief for the lack of
26 maneuverable space in the restroom.

27 The Court is not persuaded by Plaintiff’s suggestion that she should be allowed to proceed
28 with claims not pled in her operative complaint because *Oliver* left open “the possibility that an

1 expert report could provide proper notice.” Pl. Reply at 3-4. It is true that *Oliver* stopped short of
2 announcing an absolute rule, stating rather that, “[i]n general, only disclosures of barriers in a
3 properly pleaded complaint can provide [adequate] notice; a disclosure made during discovery,
4 including in an expert report, would rarely be an adequate substitute.” 654 F.3d at 909. *Oliver* does
5 not, however, explain in what circumstances discovery disclosures *would* adequately substitute for
6 proper pleading. *See id.* The Court’s research into California district court cases applying *Oliver*
7 revealed that, outside of the class-action context,⁷ they have thus far uniformly interpreted *Oliver* to
8 bar claims based on barriers not fairly reflected in an operative complaint. *Carr*, 2013 WL 3851230,
9 at *6; *Sharp*, 900 F. Supp. 2d at 1105-08; *Paulick*, 2012 WL 2990760, at *12; *Strong*, 2011 WL
10 5374125, at *4; *O’Campo*, 2011 WL 5241351, at *2-3. An unpublished Ninth Circuit case, *Rush*,
11 follows the same approach. 2013 WL 1288068, at *1 n.1. Plaintiff is correct that *Oliver* left open at
12 least a possibility that, in some hypothetical case, disclosure of a barrier in an expert report could
13 provide sufficient notice. This is not such a case, however.

14 The Court finds unavailing Plaintiff’s argument that a policy interest in discouraging
15 piecemeal ADA litigation authorizes her to proceed as to barriers not pled in her operative complaint.
16 Pl. Reply at 3-4. Plaintiff cites *Chapman v. Pier 1 Imports (U.S.), Inc.*, 631 F.3d 939, 952 (9th Cir.
17 2011) for the proposition that “[t]he Ninth Circuit has urged resolution of all barriers in one action.”
18 *Id.* at 3. Plaintiff’s reliance on *Chapman* is misplaced. The passage Plaintiff cites is a quotation from
19 *Doran*, a case addressing not pleading requirements but constitutional standing requirements for
20 ADA plaintiffs in barrier cases. *See Chapman*, 631 F.3d at 952 (citing *Doran v. 7-Eleven, Inc.*, 524
21 F.3d 1034, 1045 (9th Cir. 2008)). *Chapman* is distinguishable on that basis. The Court is bolstered
22 in this conclusion by the fact that the plaintiff in *Oliver* made the same argument Plaintiff advances
23 here, and the *Oliver* court rejected it for the same reasons. *Compare Oliver*, 654 F.3d at 909 (there,
24 plaintiff argued “that the complaint need not give the defendant notice of every barrier for which the
25 plaintiff seeks relief, because a disabled plaintiff who has encountered at least one barrier at a facility
26 can sue to remove all the barriers at the facility related to his specific disability”) with Pl. Reply at 4

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28 ⁷ *See, e.g., Moeller*, 816 F. Supp. 2d at 851 (distinguishing *Oliver* in class-action case);
Vallabharapurapu v. Burger King Corp., 276 F.R.D. 611, 615 (N.D. Cal. 2011) (same).

1 (arguing that the “relevant inquiries” for whether a plaintiff can sue to remove an ADA barrier should
2 be whether the barrier exists, whether it relates to a plaintiff’s disability, and whether any defense
3 exists). The *Oliver* court concluded that “*Doran* [did] not help [the plaintiff there], because it speaks
4 only to constitutional standing; it sheds no light on what a plaintiff’s complaint must include to
5 comply with the fair notice requirement of Rule 8.” 654 F.3d at 909. Because Plaintiff’s argument
6 rests on *Chapman* and *Chapman* merely quotes *Doran*, Plaintiff’s policy argument for relief from
7 Rule 8 pleading requirements fails for the same reasons stated in *Oliver*.

8 In sum, the low-level push plate barrier is concededly not identified in the FAC in any manner
9 and therefore cannot form a basis for relief. Accordingly, as to that barrier, the Court **DENIES**
10 Plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment and **GRANTS** Defendant’s cross-motion. The FAC does,
11 however, give adequate notice of the accessible-route, entrance-landing, and restroom-space barriers.
12 The Court proceeds to the merits of the claims based thereon.

13 **B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

14 **1. The ADA**

15 Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination against people “on the basis of disability in the
16 full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations
17 of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a
18 place of public accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a). To make a prima facie showing of
19 discrimination under Title III here, Plaintiff must show that: (1) she is disabled; (2) Defendant’s
20 gasoline station is a place of public accommodation; and (3) Plaintiff was denied access because of
21 her disability. See *Molski v. M.J. Cable, Inc.*, 481 F.3d 724, 730 (9th Cir. 2007). It is undisputed that
22 Plaintiff is disabled and that Defendant’s gasoline station is a place of public accommodation. Thus,
23 with respect to each of the remaining three barriers, only the third element is in dispute.

24 This third element requires Plaintiff to show that Defendant has violated an applicable
25 accessibility standard. *Moeller v. Taco Bell Corp.*, 816 F. Supp. 2d 831, 847 (N.D. Cal. 2011) (citing
26 *Chapman*, 631 F.3d at 945; *Donald v. Cafe Royale*, 218 Cal. App. 3d 168, 183 (Cal. Ct. App. 1990)).
27 Different accessibility standards apply depending on when a building was constructed: new
28 construction provisions apply to places of public accommodation constructed after January 26, 1993;

1 “readily achievable” standards apply to buildings constructed before January 26, 1993; and
2 “alteration” standards apply to post-January 26, 1993 alterations of buildings that existed prior to
3 January 26, 1993. 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181, 12182; *see also Moeller*, 816 F. Supp. 2d at 847;
4 *Californians for Disability Rights v. Mervyn’s LLC*, 165 Cal. App. 4th 571, 584 (Cal. Ct. App.
5 2008). The undisputed facts establish that Defendant’s gasoline station (i) was constructed in 1969
6 and (ii) was not materially altered until Defendant began remediation efforts in late 2012. *See* Dkt.
7 No. 58-1, Fact 5. Accordingly, the subject gas station is governed by the “readily achievable”
8 standard for existing structures for purposes of the instant motions.

9 Under this standard, “barriers must be removed where it is ‘readily achievable’ to do so.”
10 *Moeller*, 816 F. Supp. 2d at 847. “Readily achievable means ‘easily accomplishable and able to be
11 carried out without much difficulty or expense.’” *M.J. Cable*, 481 F.3d at 730 (quoting 42 U.S.C. §
12 12181(9)). Where modifications are readily achievable, they must be made in accordance with the
13 ADA’s exacting and comprehensive standards: “‘obedience to the to the spirit of the ADA’ does not
14 excuse noncompliance” *Chapman*, 631 F.3d at 945 (quoting *Long v. Coast Resorts, Inc.*, 267
15 F.3d 918, 923 (9th Cir. 2001)).

16 District “courts are generally in agreement that whether barrier removal is readily achievable
17 is an affirmative defense,” though the Ninth Circuit has yet to address the issue. *Wilson*, 479 F.
18 Supp. 2d at 1133 n.7. Courts also generally agree that defendants may waive the “readily
19 achievable” affirmative defense, for instance, by omitting it from their answer. *See id.* at 1133-34;
20 *but see Rodriguez v. Barrita, Inc.*, C 09-04057 RS, 2012 WL 3538014, at *10 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 1,
21 2012) (defendants may assert readily-achievable defense after pleading stage absent prejudice to
22 plaintiff).

23 2. California Disability Discrimination Statutes

24 In addition to ADA claims, disabled plaintiffs may also bring causes of action based on
25 California state law. Two such laws, the Unruh Act and the DPA, incorporate ADA standards such
26 that “[a] violation of the ADA also constitutes a violation of both the Unruh Act and the DPA.”
27 *Californians for Disability Rights*, 165 Cal. App. 4th at 586 (citing Cal. Civ. Code §§ 51(f), 54(c)).
28 “Because the Unruh Act is coextensive with the ADA and [unlike the ADA] allows for monetary

1 damages, litigants in federal court in California often pair state Unruh Act claims with federal ADA
2 claims.” *M.J. Cable*, 481 F.3d at 731. The Unruh Act imposes damages “for each and every offense
3 . . . , up to a maximum of three times the amount of actual damage but in no case less than four
4 thousand dollars (\$4,000), and any attorney’s fees that may be determined by the court in addition
5 thereto” *Id.* § 52(a). DPA claims operate similarly to Unruh claims; that is, an ADA violation
6 establishes a DPA violation for which money damages and attorney fees may be sought, though the
7 DPA authorizes minimum statutory damages of \$1,000 rather than Unruh’s \$4,000. *See* Cal. Civ.
8 Code §§ 54.1(d), 54.3(a). Because the Unruh Act and the DPA “overlap,” litigants may seek
9 damages under only one of the statutes. *Kohler v. Presidio Int’l, Inc.*, CV 10-4680 PSG PJWX, 2013
10 WL 1246801 (C.D. Cal. Mar. 25, 2013) (citing Cal. Civ. Code § 54.3(c) (“A person may not be held
11 liable for damages pursuant to both this section and Section 52 for the same act or failure to act.”)).⁸

12 **C. BARRIERS AT ISSUE**

13 **1. Accessible Route from the Public Way**

14 a. Prima Facie ADA Violation

15 Plaintiff alleges that the gas station lacks a “properly identified and configured accessible
16 route” from the “public way” (i.e., sidewalk) to the convenience store entrance. FAC ¶ 11(b). At the
17 time that Plaintiff visited the gas station in May 2010, the gas station lacked an ADA-compliant
18 accessible route. Despite remediation efforts, Plaintiff maintains that the route remains in violation
19 of the ADA.

20 The ADA permits accessible routes to have a cross-slope of no more than 2 percent. When
21 Plaintiff’s designated expert conducted his initial site visit at the subject gas station, he suggested two
22 “possible” locations for an accessible route. *See* Layman Initial Report at 16, 27-28. Defendant built

23
24 ⁸ As Plaintiff emphasizes in her briefing, *e.g.*, Pl. Opp’n at 8-9, California has its own accessibility
25 standards, violations of which can support California state-law claims independent of any ADA
26 violations. *See* CAL. CIV. PRAC. CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION § 12:6.50 (describing relationship between
27 Unruh Act, DPA, and ADA). The Unruh Act, DPA, and the California Health and Safety Code all
28 provide private rights of action independent of the ADA. At present, however, the Court need not
determine whether Plaintiff is entitled to relief under California state law alone. Plaintiff’s ADA
claims based on the accessible-route and entrance-landing barriers survive summary judgment and, as
set forth in Section III.C.3 *infra*, the Court declines to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over
Plaintiff’s state-law claims arising from the restroom-space barrier.

1 a route that roughly conforms to one suggested by Layman, but, while Plaintiff claims Layman
2 identified a route running in a straight line from the sidewalk to the convenience store entrance (*see*
3 Pl. Reply at 8), the route Defendant actually built bends. The bend allows Defendant to avoid placing
4 ADA-required “truncated domes” at a point on the sidewalk where there are utility boxes. Dkt. No.
5 47-1 (“Dowgialo Decl.”) ¶ 36.⁹ According to Plaintiff, however, the bend also causes the route to
6 slope in excess of the 2 percent grade permitted by the ADA. *See* Layman Supp. Report at 4.
7 Defendant’s designated expert, Dowgialo, concedes as much, stating that while “[t]he major portion
8 of the accessible route . . . has a cross slope of less than 2% . . . [,] the first 14 [feet] shows a cross
9 slope of 3.33%” Dowgialo Decl. ¶ 36. Dowgialo further opines that the excessively sloped
10 route, though it does not comply with ADA requirements, “complies with the intent of the ADA.” *Id.*
11 As a matter of law, neither substantial compliance nor “obedience to the spirit of the ADA” are viable
12 defenses to ADA liability. *Long*, 267 F.3d at 923. The evidence before the Court establishes that the
13 slope of the route from the public way does not comply with ADA standards.

14 b. Waiver of Readily-Achievable Defense

15 Notwithstanding the route’s conceded noncompliance with ADA standards, Defendant argues
16 that it is not liable under the ADA because a 2 percent slope along the entire designated route is not
17 “readily achievable.” Plaintiff responds that Defendant has waived the readily-achievable defense
18 due to its conduct during discovery. The Court disagrees with Plaintiff. Defendant pled the readily-

19 _____
20 ⁹ Plaintiff objects that Dowgialo’s declaration, as well as that of David Polanco Jr., contain
21 impermissible legal argument. Dkt. Nos. 47-2 (“Polanco Jr. Decl.”), 58-10 (“Obj’n to Dowgialo
22 Decl.”) & 58-11 (“Obj’n to Polanco Jr. Decl.”). The Court agrees, and does not consider the legal
23 arguments put forth in the declarations to comprise part of their expert opinions. The Court applies
24 the same principle to those portions of Plaintiff’s expert’s reports that do the same.

25 Defendant argues that Plaintiff’s evidentiary objections should be overruled because they were
26 filed separately from Plaintiff’s opposition brief, in contravention of this Court’s Civil Local Rule 7-
27 3(a). Def. Reply. at 1 (citing Civ. L.R. 7-3(a) (“Any evidentiary and procedural objections to the
28 motion must be contained within the brief or memorandum.”)). The essence of Defendant’s
opposition is that, by ignoring Rule 7-3(a), Plaintiff fit more argument into her brief than she
otherwise could have. *See id.* The Court agrees, but given that the Dowgialo and Polanco Jr.
declarations contain extensive legal argument themselves, the Court determines that, although neither
party confined its arguments to the briefs, neither party obtained an unfair advantage from doing so.
Counsel for both parties are reminded of their obligation to know and follow this Court’s Local
Rules. *See* Civ. L.R. 11-4(a)(2), 11-4(a)(4). Failure to do so may result in sanctions.

1 achievable defense in its Answer, thereby preserving the defense for Rule 8 purposes. *See* Fed. R.
2 Civ. P. 8(c)(1); Answer ¶ 22. Even if it had not, the Federal Rules contemplate raising certain
3 defenses for the first time at trial, *see* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(2)(c), and the Ninth Circuit has liberalized
4 the requirement for when affirmative defenses are presented, *Simmons v. Navajo Cnty., Ariz.*, 609
5 F.3d 1011, 1023 (9th Cir. 2010).

6 Plaintiff argues principally that Defendant “waived” the readily-achievable defense through
7 discovery responses in which Defendant declined to respond to certain discovery requests on the
8 ground that it was not then asserting the defense. *See* Pl. Opp’n at 13-15. Federal Rule of Civil
9 Procedure 26(e) places litigants under an affirmative duty to supplement non-deposition discovery
10 responses, even after the discovery cut-off date. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(e); CAL. PRAC. GUIDE FED.
11 CIV. PRO. BEFORE TRIAL § 11:1241. According to Plaintiff, Defendant agreed to do so and did not.

12 Failure to supplement triggers the sanctions provisions of Rule 37(c): the nonsupplementing
13 party may not use the information it withheld “to supply evidence on a motion, at a hearing, or at a
14 trial, unless the failure was substantially justified or is harmless.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(c)(1). This
15 sanction is intended to be “self-executing” and “automatic,” though its “harshness” is mitigated by
16 Rule 37’s exceptions for substantially justified or harmless withholding. *Yeti by Molly, Ltd. v.*
17 *Deckers Outdoor Corp.*, 259 F.3d 1101, 1106 (9th Cir. 2001).

18 Here, undisputed evidence establishes that Defendant declined to answer interrogatories or
19 produce requested financial documents focused on the readily-achievable defense on the basis that
20 Defendant was not then asserting the defense. Defendant qualified these refusals by promising to
21 supplement its responses in the event that it did assert the readily-achievable defense. Def. Supp.
22 Interrog. Resp. at 11-15; Def. RFP Resp. at 10-11. Apparently, the parties stipulated that Defendant
23 could decline to respond in this fashion, as Defendant’s counsel indicated on the record at a
24 deposition. *See* Polanco Sr. Dep. at 20:15-19. Pointing to these statements by Defendant, Plaintiff
25 argues that Defendant has laid an “ambush” by asserting the readily-achievable defense for the first
26 time only after the close of discovery. Pl. Opp’n at 15; Pl. Reply at 5. Plaintiff suggests that Rule 37
27 requires automatic exclusion of any evidence that Defendant would introduce in support of the
28 readily-achievable defense. Pl. Opp’n at 15.

1 Plaintiff is incorrect. Rule 37 excuses failures to supplement discovery responses that are
2 “substantially justified,” and even where such failures are not substantially justified, a court may
3 impose lesser sanctions than complete exclusion. Here, Defendant’s failure to supplement its
4 discovery responses was substantially justified by Plaintiff’s continuing failure to amend, or even
5 seek leave to amend, its operative complaint. The FAC does not notify Defendant of the specific
6 barriers supporting Plaintiff’s claims *following remediation*. That fact partly excuses Defendant’s
7 failure to identify the barriers for which Defendant would assert the readily-achievable defense.
8 Further, Defendant has made a showing that some representations in Plaintiff’s expert’s initial and
9 supplemental expert reports were at least arguably inconsistent. These apparent inconsistencies make
10 Defendant’s noncompliance yet more understandable, even if not altogether justified. Reliance on an
11 opposing party’s retained witness to ascertain the scope of one’s own obligations under the ADA is
12 not fully justifiable: it is the pleadings rather than the ad hoc statements of a nonparty witness that
13 determine what is at issue in a lawsuit. But, given Plaintiff’s reluctance to amend her pleading, the
14 Court finds that Defendant’s reliance on Layman’s representations was “substantially” justifiable.
15 Accordingly, the Court declines to impose Rule 37 sanctions for Defendant’s failure to supplement
16 its discovery responses before asserting the readily-achievable defense.¹⁰ Defendant may assert its
17 readily-achievable defense as to the accessible-route barrier.

18 c. Merits of Claim Based on Lack of Accessible Route

19 Having determined that Defendant may assert a readily-achievable defense as to the route
20 from the public way, the Court **DENIES** both parties’ summary judgment motions as to that barrier.
21 The evidence establishes that the route designated as accessible by Defendant is not actually ADA-
22 compliant. However, a triable issue of fact remains as to whether making the route ADA-compliant
23 is readily achievable. Defendant argues that it is not, emphasizing that correcting the slope of the
24 route would require it to demolish the existing asphalt at the gas station, regrade the earth below, and
25

26 ¹⁰ The Court reaches the issue of Rule 37 sanctions despite Plaintiff’s failure to present a proper Rule
27 37 motion. *Cf. Yeti by Molly*, 259 F.3d at 1106 (Rule 37 sanctions are “self-executing”). The Court’s
28 Local Rules required Plaintiff to seek Rule 37 sanctions in a separately filed motion. *See* Civ. L.R.
37-4(a), 7-8(a). Instead, she raised the issue of Rule 37 sanctions in her summary judgment
opposition brief. Pl. Opp’n at 15.

1 repave the station, which would result in expenses not only from actually performing the work but
2 also lost business while the station closed for renovation. Plaintiff argues, in essence, that Defendant
3 can afford it.

4 The ADA provides:

5 In determining whether an action is readily achievable, factors to be considered
6 include—

- 7 (A) the nature and cost of the action needed under this chapter;
- 8 (B) the overall financial resources of the facility or facilities involved in the
9 action; the number of persons employed at such facility; the effect on
10 expenses and resources, or the impact otherwise of such action upon
11 the operation of the facility;
- 12 (C) the overall financial resources of the covered entity; the overall size of
13 the business of a covered entity with respect to the number of its
14 employees; the number, type, and location of its facilities; and
- 15 (D) the type of operation or operations of the covered entity, including the
16 composition, structure, and functions of the workforce of such entity;
17 the geographic separateness, administrative or fiscal relationship of the
18 facility or facilities in question to the covered entity.

19 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9).

20 The evidence now before the Court does not sufficiently address the factors identified in
21 Section 12181(9). For example, the parties dispute the meaning of statements Polanco Sr. made at
22 his deposition relating to his plans to remodel the gas station at a cost of roughly \$700,000. Plaintiff
23 urges the Court to interpret these statements to mean that Defendant has enough “overall financial
24 resources” to pay for the needed alterations to the gas station asphalt and weather the loss of revenue.
25 Defendant responds, essentially, that Plaintiff has taken the statements out of context. However, the
26 context that would allow the Court to determine which side is correct is lacking. Defendant appears
27 to have declined to produce discovery that might have supplied a more complete picture of its
28 finances. Defendant’s readily-achievable defense is not amenable to summary judgment on the
record now before the Court, especially in light of Defendant’s apparent failure to disclose relevant
information even after asserting its readily-achievable defense. The record is too threadbare to
support granting either party summary judgment as to the readily-achievable defense.

The Court concludes that there is a triable dispute as to whether compliance with the ADA’s
requirement of an accessible route from the public way to the accessible entrance was readily
achievable. As such, the Court **DENIES** both summary judgment motions as to the accessible-route

1 barrier. The Court deems the marked accessible route’s non-compliance with ADA slope
2 requirements conclusively established for purposes of trial.

3 **2. Slope of Entrance Landing**

4 Plaintiff alleges that “[p]roper 60” x 60” door landings are not provided at all accessible
5 entrances and exits” of the subject gas station. FAC ¶ 11(n). The record before the Court shows that,
6 before remediation, the convenience store entrance had a noncompliant door landing in the form of a
7 narrow slab of concrete reminiscent of a traditional sidewalk. As part of its remediation efforts,
8 Defendant expanded the size of the landing by pouring new concrete around the existing slab.
9 Plaintiff claims that the new, enhanced landing, while concededly at least 60 inches by 60 inches, is
10 nevertheless not “proper” because it slopes in excess of 2 percent.

11 Defendant does not assert the readily-achievable defense with respect to the entrance-landing
12 barrier. Rather, Defendant asserts that the slope is not actually excessive and that the entrance
13 landing is therefore ADA-compliant. *See* Def. Reply at 8. Defendant’s expert, Dowgialo, and
14 Plaintiff’s expert, Layman, offer conflicting measurements of the slope of the landing. *Compare*
15 Layman Decl. ¶ 5(c) (“The slope of the landing at the entrance door measures 2.9%.”) *with* Dowgialo
16 Decl. ¶ 54 (“Layman is wrong”; the slope is 1.55%). Defendant urges the Court to reject Layman’s
17 measurements and proffers evidence to impeach him. Polanco Jr. Decl. ¶ 79 (declaring that Polanco
18 Jr. saw Layman place his level unevenly and use a level shorter than the width of a typical
19 wheelchair). The Court, however, may not weigh credibility in summary judgment proceedings.
20 Resolving the dispute as to the slope of the landing will require the Court to evaluate not only each
21 expert’s credibility, but the process by which they reached their conclusions. The record as it exists
22 does not permit the Court to make an informed determination.

23 In sum, the two experts’ conflicting measurements present a material dispute over the actual
24 slope of the entrance landing which the Court cannot resolve on the record before it. Therefore, the
25 Court **DENIES** both parties’ summary judgment motions as to this issue.

26 **3. Insufficient Restroom Space**

27 Plaintiff’s allegation that the gas station’s “restroom does not provide sufficient space for a
28 wheelchair to maneuver,” FAC ¶ 11(gg), forms the basis of separate claims for relief under the ADA

1 and California state law. It is undisputed that the post-remediation restroom complies with ADA
2 structural requirements. *See* Joint Fact Stmt., Chart 3 (citing purported CBC violations but not
3 ADA). Accordingly, the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s summary judgment motion, and **GRANTS**
4 Defendant’s cross-motion, with respect to the ADA claim premised on a lack of insufficient space in
5 the restroom.

6 With respect to Plaintiff’s state-law claims arising from the restroom-space barrier, the Court
7 determines that they raise “a novel or complex issue of State law” and declines to exercise
8 supplemental jurisdiction over them. 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c)(1). For the reasons set forth below, the
9 Court **DISMISSES** Plaintiff’s state-law claims to the extent they are predicated on the restroom-space
10 barrier.

11 Section 1115B.3.2(3) of the 2010 CBC requires an accessible toilet facility to provide a
12 “maneuvering space” in front of the toilet measuring at least 60 inches wide and 48 inches deep. The
13 undisputed facts establish that the maneuvering space provided in front of the toilet at Defendant’s
14 gas station is less than 48 inches deep. Layman Supp. Report at 5 (clear space in front of toilet is
15 only 39.25 inches deep); Polanco Jr. Decl. ¶ 25 (during remediation, Polanco Jr. decided not to
16 provide 48 inches of clearance because doing so would involve moving a load-bearing steel wall).
17 Defendant argues that the restroom-space barrier is nevertheless not actionable because it falls within
18 Exception 3.6 to Section 1134B.2 of the 2010 CBC. Def. Opp’n at 24-25; Def. Reply at 11-12.

19 The general rule from which Defendant seeks exception is that, although older buildings do
20 not need to comply with current accessibility requirements, any alterations to those buildings do. *See*
21 11 CAL. JUR. 3d BUILDING REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT § 217 (citing Cal. Gov’t Code 4456;
22 Cal. Health & Safety Code §19959). However, “[t]his requirement shall only apply to the area of
23 specific alteration . . . and shall not be construed to mean that the entire building or facility is subject
24 to” current accessibility standards. Cal. Health & Safety Code § 19959. The 2010 CBC reflects this
25 statutory rule at Section 1134B.2: “When alterations, structural repairs or additions are made to
26 existing buildings or facilities, they shall comply with all provisions of Division I—New Buildings,
27 *except as modified by this division*. These requirements shall apply only to the area of specific
28 alteration, structural repair or addition and shall include . . . sanitary facilities . . .” 2010 CBC,

1 Section 1134B.2.1 (emphasis added). The regulation then provides a series of exceptions to this
2 general rule. The exception upon which Defendant relies, Exception 3.6, stands for the proposition
3 that alterations undertaken “solely for the purpose of barrier removal” pursuant to ADA or CBC
4 requirements “shall be limited to the actual work of the project.”¹¹

5 In this case, the record amply discloses that Defendant altered the restroom for the purpose of
6 complying with the ADA and, in doing so, substantially remodeled the restroom. Defendant
7 corrected the slope of the floor; moved a non-load-bearing steel wall; attempted but ultimately
8 decided not to move another, load-bearing steel wall; changed the position of the toilet within the
9 restroom; installed a new “door and door closer”; and replaced or removed numerous fixtures.
10 Polanco Jr. Decl. ¶¶ 23-35; *see also* Layman Decl. ¶ 9 (describing new configuration of restroom).

11 Defendant appears to argue that, because this remediation effort was undertaken “for the
12 purpose of barrier removal pursuant to” the ADA, *all* aspects of the restroom are exempt from CBC
13 compliance, including the restroom-space barrier. *See* Def. Opp’n at 24-25; Def. Reply at 11-12.
14 Plaintiff’s principal response is that Defendant “was not legally permitted to make alterations which
15 reduced the accessibility of the restroom.” Pl. Opp’n at 7. For support, Plaintiff quotes Section
16 1134B.1. That regulation provides, in pertinent part, that no alteration “shall be undertaken which
17 decreases or has the effect of decreasing accessibility or usability of a building or facility below the
18 requirements for new construction at the time of renovation, structural repair, alteration or addition.”

19 The parties’ arguments raise the question of not just *whether* Exception 3.6 applies, but *how*.
20 Plaintiff, in a one-sentence argument, posits that Defendant may not avail itself of Exception 3.6 if its
21 remediation efforts reduced the accessibility of the restroom. The issue requires more fulsome
22 consideration than Plaintiff has given it. Section 1134B.1 refers to alterations which “decrease[] or
23 ha[ve] the effect of decreasing accessibility or usability of a building or facility” Plaintiff quotes
24 this language, but never explains how it applies here. Specifically, Plaintiff does not explain whether
25 the “accessibility or usability of a building or facility” is to be determined holistically by evaluating

26 _____
27 ¹¹ Exception 3.6 lists alterations that might be undertaken for the purpose of barrier removal,
28 “including” installing grab bars in toilet stalls; rearranging toilet partitions to increase maneuvering
space; insulating lavatory pipes under sinks to prevent burns; installing a raised toilet seat; installing
a full-length bathroom mirror; and repositioning the paper towel dispenser in a bathroom.

1 the overall accessibility or usability of the facility or building, or, on the other hand, by holding each
2 feature and fixture up to the applicable standard in isolation. The 2010 CBC does not define
3 “usability,” but it does define “accessibility” as “the *combination* of various elements in a building,
4 facility, site, or area, or portion thereof which allows access, circulation and the full use of the
5 building and facilities by persons with disabilities in conformance with this chapter.” 2010 CBC,
6 Section 1102B (emphasis supplied). The regulation defines “facility” as “a building, structure, room,
7 site, complex *or any portion thereof* that is built, altered, improved or developed to serve a particular
8 purpose. Facilities shall include all or any portion of buildings, structures, site developments,
9 complexes, equipment, roads, walks, sidewalks, passageways, parking lots or other real or personal
10 property located on a site.” *Id.* The interaction of these two definitions in Section 1134B.1 is
11 unclear: the definition of “accessibility” would appear to commend a holistic evaluation that takes
12 elements in “combination,” but the definition of “facility” appears to militate for isolated scrutiny of
13 each “portion” of a room. Plaintiff, not having identified this issue, cites no authority bearing on
14 which approach is appropriate. Nor has the Court’s independent research revealed any. This
15 question alone, then, appears to be both novel and complex, as contemplated by 28 U.S.C. § 1367. It
16 may involve a delicate question of California policy which this Court declines to resolve, especially
17 in the absence of extensive, directly responsive briefing.

18 Accordingly, the Court exercises its discretion to **DECLINE** supplemental jurisdiction over
19 Plaintiff’s state-law claims based on the restroom-space barrier. Having already found that the
20 restroom does not violate the ADA, the Court **DISMISSES** both the federal and state claims based on
21 that alleged barrier. With respect to the state law claims, the dismissal is without prejudice.

22 **IV. CONCLUSION**

23 FOR THE REASONS SET FORTH ABOVE, the Court **HEREBY ORDERS** as follows:

- 24 1. With respect to the barriers alleged in Plaintiff’s First Amended Complaint at
25 paragraphs 11(a), 11(c) through (m), 11(o) through (ff), and 11(hh) through (nn),
26 inclusive, the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment as to both her
27 ADA and state-law claims and **GRANTS** Defendant’s cross-motion. It is undisputed
28 that those barriers have been remediated and the claims based on them are moot.

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2. With respect to the low-level push plate barrier, the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment and **GRANTS** Defendant’s cross-motion because the alleged barrier is not identified in the First Amended Complaint.
3. With respect to the barriers alleged in Plaintiff’s First Amended Complaint at paragraphs 11(b) (alleging the lack of a “properly identified and configured accessible route” from the public way) and 11(n) (alleging the lack of “[p]roper 60” x 60” door landings” at the accessible entrance), the Court **DENIES** both parties’ motions for summary judgment. Both barriers are identified in the First Amended Complaint. With respect to the accessible route, there is a triable issue as to whether bringing the accessible route into conformity with applicable standards is readily achievable. With respect to the door landing, there is a triable issue as to the slope of the landing.
4. With respect to the barrier alleged in the First Amended Complaint at paragraph 11(gg) (“sufficient space for a wheelchair to maneuver” in the restroom), the Court **DENIES** Plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment and **GRANTS** Defendant’s cross-motion with respect to Plaintiff’s ADA claim and **DECLINES** supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law claims based on this barrier. The state law claims are **DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE**.

This Order terminates Docket Nos. 46 and 47.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: August 23, 2013



YVONNE GONZALEZ ROGERS
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT JUDGE